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# Turin as exploratory field of migration flows and multiethnicity

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Urban design case study exploration

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## Synopsis

With migration flows, cities receive an increasing number of newcomers that bring with them different cultures and backgrounds, and that have urgent needs for housing, language training, schooling and jobs as ways of insertion to their new environment. In the case of Turin, migration history is strong and nowadays the number of foreigners living in the city represent 15% of its total inhabitants. (Istat, 2017) The study presented aims to understand the insertion spaces newcomers have, within a multiethnic area where the number of foreigners is concentrated. This area holds 40% of foreigners as residents and within it, a problematic site is identified. An urban design exploration is proposed as a response to the site and its inhabitants' necessities. The project has the potential to consolidate the area with the generation of new and needed spaces for cultural and social exchange.

**Key words:** Migration, Multiethnicity, informal-spaces, regeneration.

## 1. Introduction

We share spaces in cities with others who in many ways are not like us, and we need to find ways of co-existing in these spaces. (Sandercock, 2000) With migration flows, cities receive an increasing number of newcomers that bring with them different backgrounds, and that have urgent needs for housing, language training, schooling and jobs as ways of insertion to their new environment. In the case of Turin, the city has a strong migration history, it has always been a destination city for migratory flows. These flows and reasons for human movements have changed during time and the city has responded in different ways: from the generation of peripheral “borghi”<sup>1</sup> and “borgate” to the building of industrial infrastructures and housing projects, and the current development of regeneration policies that involve urban requalification, “case del quartiere”<sup>2</sup> and cultural associations that help the city become a hybrid inclusive place. Even though inclusive areas are available, the demand for welfare spaces is higher than ever. This demand makes studies that deal and generate welfare spaces relevant. Spaces that propitiate encounters help make the multiethnicity of the city evident and bring opportunities to ease the process of insertion of newcomers.

## 2. Multi-ethnic area in Turin

Nowadays, the number of foreigners living in Turin configures 15% of its population. (Istat) Within the 92 administrative zones that are part of the city, the areas with the highest number of foreign inhabitants are Borgo Dora, Borgata Aurora and Monterosa, with more than 5000 inhabitants per area, representing 40% of its residents. (Fig.1) (Comune di Torino)

The research presented in this paper analyses an enclave defined by the three administrative zones aforementioned. This analysis aims to understand an area of the city that has an apparent complex morphology and that has received an increasing number of newcomers that now generate the social phenomenon of multi-ethnicity. The study decomposes with maps the general physical characteristics of the area and links them to the activities that serve as ways of insertion to the city. (Fig.2–5) The most recognizable ways of insertion found are: use of open spaces, participation in cultural and religious events, enrolment in educative institutions, opening of local businesses and use of welfare spaces. The use of open mapping sources for the analysis was crucial.<sup>3</sup> The decomposition of this piece of the city takes into account the fact that every form (of the territory, of the city) is the result of a process of progressive association of parts, and that it makes sense to break it down and investigate its components only if its substantial unity and indivisibility is taken into account. (Conzen, 1988) The analysis of field data recollected and synthesized with the maps, gives a starting point for the development of the urban and architectural

<sup>1</sup> Borghi and borgate refer to the terms “borough” and “township”, usually used as synonyms to describe peripheral areas of a city. In the case of Turin though, Borghi refer to ancient settlements formed in a rural context and borgate originated after the placement of the toll fence of the city. (Davico, 2014)

<sup>2</sup> Turin has invested in the generation of projects that could make the city an inclusive environment. The “case del quartiere” are examples of this urban regeneration efforts. These projects develop in diverse social contexts and offer services destined for specific citizens that live in the surroundings. (Devoti, 2015)

<sup>3</sup> GEO portale of Comune di Torino, Google Earth open source and site visits were used to map the spaces.



design exploration that addresses the problematic situation recognized in the area. (Fig.6).

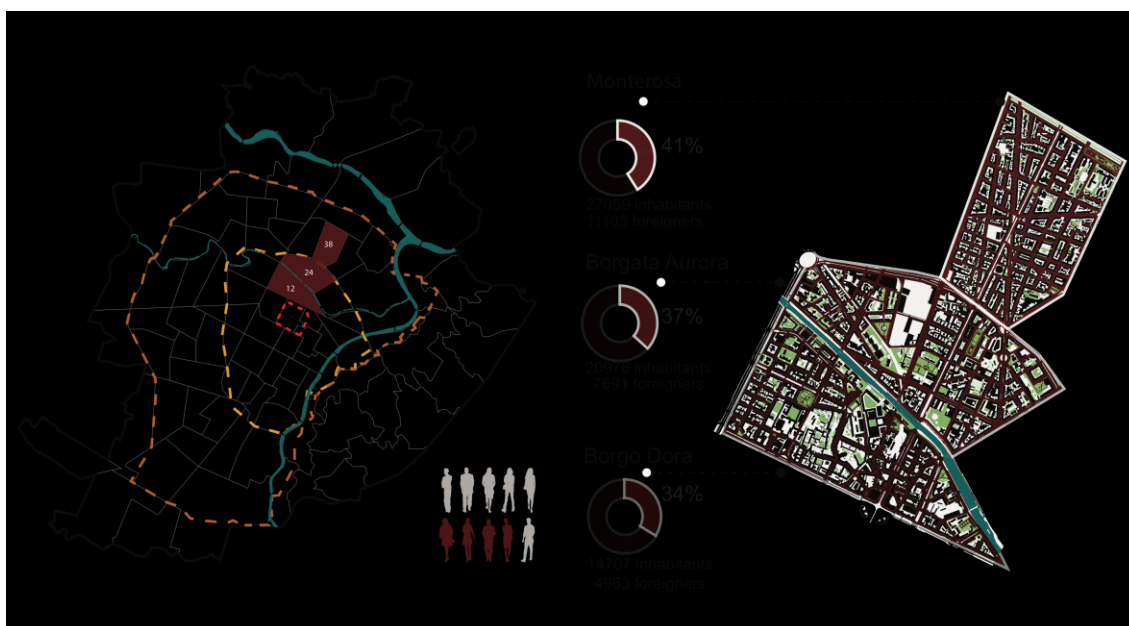


Figure 1. Areas with the highest number of foreign inhabitants in Turin.



Figure 2. Religious and cult spaces in study area.  
Figure 3. Cultural associations spaces in study area.



Figure 4. Educational spaces in study area.  
Figure 5. Markets and small ethnic businesses in main commercial axis.

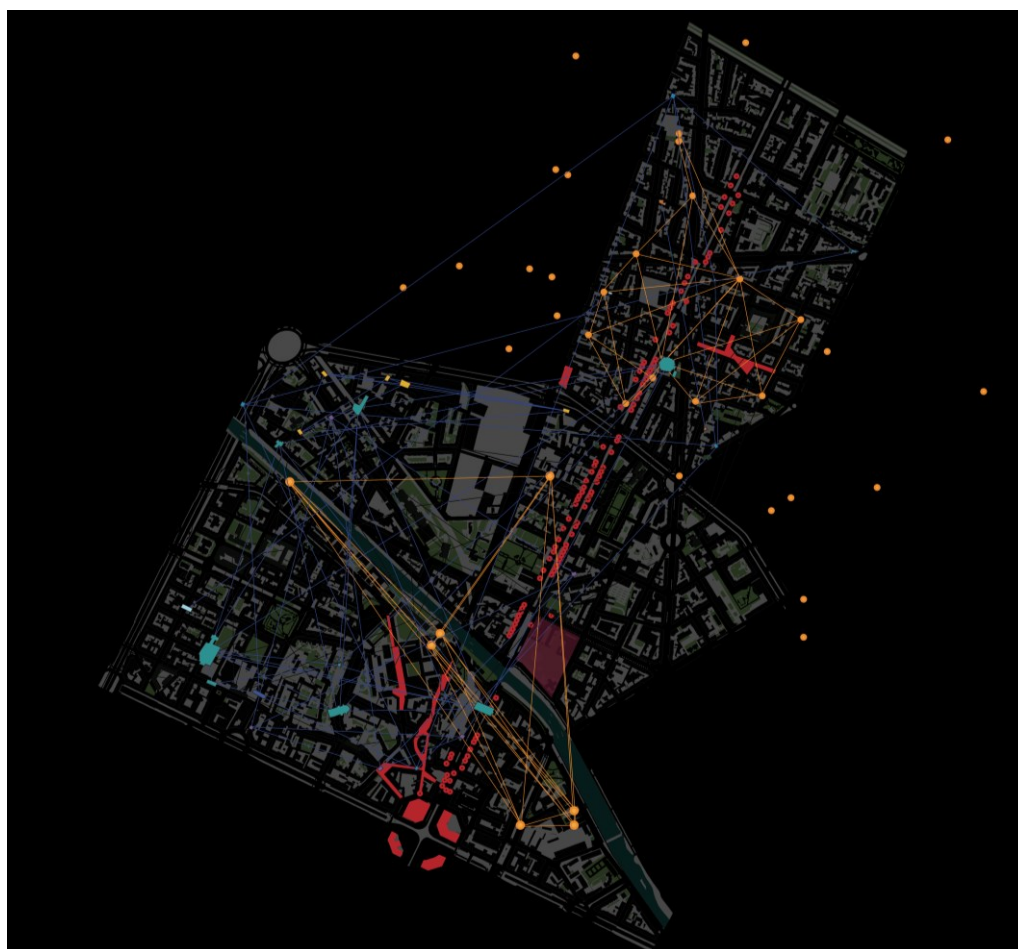


Figure 6. Spaces used as ways of insertion in the study area and recognition of intervention site.

### 3. Urban Design exploration

On a second phase of the study a problematic site is identified within the analysed area. The site represents a void in the context and in the social history of the neighborhood. It presents many challenges related to its morphology and use. Even though it has been used informally as a common space, the current spatial condition has made the place dispose to deal with drug smuggling, insecurity, homeless occupation, delinquency and perception of insecurity. Since the site lacks a defined use the area is considered an informal space. (Fig.7) Informal spaces are seen as empty and meaningless due to their temporary absence of attributed function.



Figure 7. Current situation of intervention site.

The dissection of this piece of city and the understanding of its immediate context help the development of ideas that unify the elements of the site while respecting the identity of what was generated in time. The site offers, with its physical and social necessities, the opportunity to generate spaces that allow social interactions. A project in the site works as a way to generate a sense of belonging with the addition of needed spaces. (Fig.8) Interventions in these type of spaces come as a two-way process in which spaces are created and modified as they are lived and used.

The result of the study materializes into a building complex project that responds to morphological, functional and social necessities. The complex has the potential to develop with time into an inclusive space for citizens and new comers. (Fig.9-10).



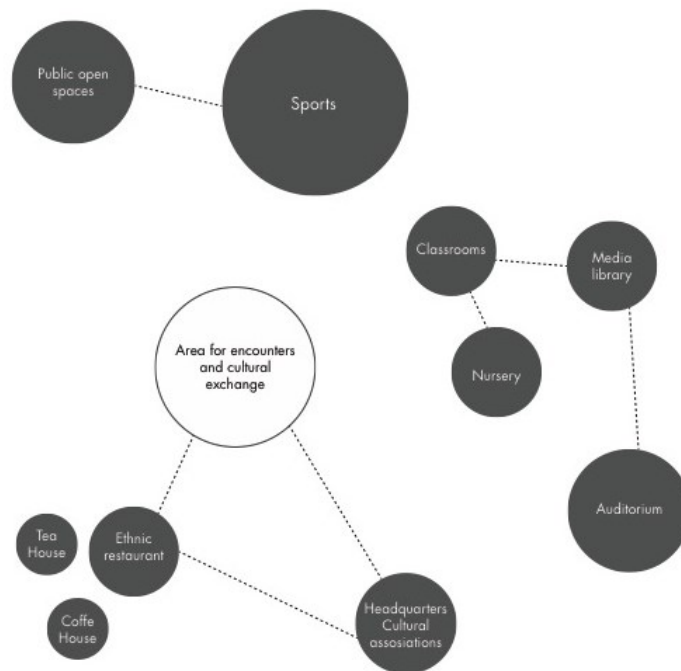


Figure 8. Programmatic spaces to be incorporated.



Figure 9. Rendering of the proposal.



Figure 10. Rendering of the proposal.



To sum up, in order for a city to evolve, differences in its demography need to be incorporated, accepted and enhanced. Multi ethnicity should be addressed and the generation of projects that dialog with the necessities of new comers and those already living in the area serve as a platform of insertion to the city. The current conditions of the area studied are the result of various events that changed it in time. The reconstruction of these changes are evident when maps and demographic data are analyzed. The findings of the study show the spaces currently being used in the area and how newcomers introduce themselves into the city through common activities. The understanding of the site's conditions as a sequence of events makes the solution proposed specific for this particular case. The response for the site's conditions needed to be a sensible one. Sensible to the local differences found in its demography, while maintaining an overall stability with the context where it was placed. (Allen, 2009) In this sense, the site offers, with its physical and social necessities, the opportunity to generate spaces that allow changing experiences and interactions between the different groups living within its context. The project presented has the potential to consolidate the area with the generation of new and needed spaces for cultural and social exchange.

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## Biography

**Ana Ricchiardi.** Architect born in Ecuador in 1991. Has carried out professional and training activities in Ecuador and Italy. Teacher at Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ) from 2014-2016. MSc. Graduate in “Architecture, Construction, City” at Politecnico di Torino, 2018. Research interests include urban morphology, urban and social sciences, landscape and urban regeneration and comparative studies. Her work shows strong commitment to prove that the integration of social, historical and cultural perspectives to design help produce the most suitable development of a project. Interested in the development of studies and projects that generate an interface between the physical and the social dimensions of cities.